

Mrs Edw Suck 6 - Dowling Apts

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"I think" says Dr. Swett - that  
you are happy in having  
unlocked so much of Italian  
literature, certainly the greatest  
in the world after Greek Latin  
English - To have interpreted  
one such literature and  
made it accessible to English  
speaking people seems to me  
a sufficient result of a  
life."

The literature of Italy requires  
to be constantly considered  
in connection with other  
literatures both those from  
which it is itself derived  
and those which it has  
deeply influenced. It is  
more deeply affected to



antiquity than any other  
European Librarian and  
may indeed be regarded  
as a continuation or renewal  
of the Latin

Its advent was long and  
unaccountably delayed  
It is the youngest of all the  
Chief European Librarians  
but when at length it did  
appear its form already  
classical appeared it  
from an infancy of  
rudeness and barbarism  
It may be compared to  
Hermes the youngest but  
most precocious of the Gods  
not like Pallas born clothed



but equal to any  
achievement from the cradle.  
"The babe was born at  
the first peep of day  
He began playing on the  
lyres at noon  
And the same evening  
did he steal away Apollo's  
heads."

They entered at once upon  
a heritage of classical tradition.  
Italians began to teach foreign  
nations long before they found  
anything to learn from them  
and this influence is so  
large a part of the glory  
of Italy that her literature



cannot be fully unlocked  
to the foreigner unless he is  
shown not only what she  
has herself effected in letters  
but how greatly she has  
modified the intellectual  
development of other  
countries  
she owes nothing to Chaucer  
Spenser or Milton but  
they are infinitely indebted  
to her.

The position she so long  
retained as the instructor  
and exemplar of civilized  
nations makes her literature  
with an importance more  
considerable than that  
attaching to the merits of



her individual authors  
illustrations as they are  
yet it is impossible to  
elucidate this momentous  
department - of the subject  
in a short manual.  
Many of the most gifted  
Italians wrote in Latin  
from Petrarch down  
Liberatore in Italy is a less  
exhaustive manifestation  
than elsewhere of the  
intellect of the Nation.  
The intellectual glory of  
France and England  
depend mainly on their  
authors and men of science.  
The Dutch artists far  
outnumber authors.



and the best energies of  
the country are employed  
in artistic production  
Michael Angelo one of the  
greatest men the world has  
seen can have claim no  
more than a paragraph  
on a handful of Sonnets  
It is indeed remarkable  
that out of the nine Italians  
most brilliantly conspicuous  
in the very first rank of  
genius and achievement  
Aguirre, Dante, Columbus  
Leonardo Michael Angelo  
Raphael Titian Galileo  
Napoleon only one is  
an author only one a



man of letters - yet all  
these made his literature  
of Italy - the reader therefore  
who deems the field of  
Italian literature meagre  
in comparison to the opulence  
of England or France  
must remember that it  
expresses a smaller proportion  
of the country's benefactions  
to humanity - yet Dr. Jowett  
says claims a front place  
for Italian literature on the  
condition that its great  
representations shall be  
weighed rather than counted  
Great literatures, like great  
Rivers seldom derive their



origin from a single fountain  
but rather rose from the soil  
in a multitude of almost  
imperceptible springs.

The Literature of Greece may  
appear an exception but  
we know that the broad  
stream of Homeric Song  
in which we first behold  
it must have been fed by  
a number of rills which  
it has absorbed into itself  
and whose original sources  
lie beyond the range of  
scrutiny - In no literature  
is this general maxim  
better exemplified than the  
Italian - The Latin and  
Italian Literatures like the



Roman and Byzantine <sup>emperors</sup>  
are in truth a single entity  
and we find none among  
great literatures whose  
beginnings are more humble  
and obscure or which at  
first, seems surprising, more  
recent.

The perfection of form led  
to the assumption that there  
has been a long period of  
development and refinement  
which did not exist.  
In truth the earliest literary  
compositions defensible as  
Italian are scarcely older  
than the thirteenth century.  
There is no other example  
in history of the obliteration



of literary taste and method  
as that which in Italy befell  
one of the most gifted people  
of the world for nearly eight  
hundred years. - After  
Boethius about 530 A.D. the  
little that is left of Latin  
becomes entirely Latinian  
except when like Virgil they  
became heroes of popular  
legend. - The explanation  
of this paralysis of Latin  
Literature in Italy while  
Greek was still an efficient  
organ of thought in the  
Eastern Empire is no doubt  
to be found in the fact  
that it never had a robust



National growth -  
The property of the learned  
and cultivated, it had  
taken no deep hold upon  
the mass of the people  
and when culture and  
learning perished and the  
vicissitudes of barbarian  
conquest it was only preserved  
apart from the services of  
the Church by absolute  
necessity for manufacturing  
Some dialects of Latin played  
a part prominently - extended  
It might have been that  
these dialects would have  
become the vehicles of  
popular legend and  
poetry, tales of story-tellers





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